



Coconino County Sheriff's Office

Bill Pribil, Sheriff

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Date: Friday March 19, 2010

Contact: Mark Christian
Search and Rescue
(928) 226-5057

Multi-Agency Response Rescues 4 Stranded on Mormon Lake

Flagstaff, AZ- On Friday 19, 2010 at about 3:50 p.m. Communications Specialists of the Coconino County Sheriff's Office and Flagstaff Police Department law enforcement facility received a call of four stranded persons in a snow cat in approximately five feet of water in Mormon lake. When emergency responders arrived it was determined the vehicles were stuck in deep mud and snow in the lake bed and not in five feet of water.

Emergency responders were able to rescue the victims with the use of the Arizona Department of Public Safety Air Rescue helicopter. The helicopter was able to land near the snow cat containing the four victims. Victims were then flown to safety to the shoreline approximately ¼ mile away and northeast of the Mormon Lake Fire station.

Apparently the Polaris Ranger operator drove his vehicle onto the surface of the lake on Thursday March 18, at which time his vehicle became stuck in the mud and snow. Investigators discovered this same individual apparently was assisted by the Mormon Lake Fire Department in a similar situation several weeks ago and was warned not to drive his vehicle onto the lake bed.

The vehicle operator called a local towing service for assistance, who recommended a Phoenix resident in possession of a snowcat vehicle. The operator of the snowcat, two passengers, and the Polaris operator accessed the Polaris Ranger at approximately 2:30 p.m. this date and attempted to pull the vehicle out of the mud and snow. The snow cat became disabled when the two front tracks became stuck in the deep mud and snow surface. Three victims were very wet and cold, while the fourth victim remained in the snowcat. All victims were removed without incident and subsequently refused medical treatment. The victims included two Flagstaff residents, one Phoenix resident (snowcat operator), and one Chandler, Arizona resident.

This multi agency response included the Arizona Department of Public Safety Air Rescue helicopter, Mormon Lake Fire Department, Flagstaff Fire Department Special Operations Team, Guardian Ambulance, Coconino County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, and Coconino County Sheriff's Office deputies.

The Coconino County Sheriff's Office would like to remind recreational users that due to this winter's heavy precipitation most forest service roads will be impassable for several weeks. Please remember that off road travel could also be hazardous. Individuals should exercise caution when attempting to use motor vehicles in unknown and questionable conditions.

###